

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER XX.

The brougham whirled Josine back from the station, and she made her way at once to Lady Blanche.

Her ladyship was lying down on the couch in her room, and merely turned her head as Josine entered; her face was very pale, and there were dark marks under the eyes, telling of the agony of suspense and actual fear she had endured.

"Well?" she said, her dark-brown eyes resting on Josine's face with feverish, haughty impatience. Josine smiled, and began taking off her gloves as she would have done in the presence of an equal, and Lady Blanche flushed as she noticed the action.

"It is all right, miladi!" said Josine. "Fortune has favored us, and Miss Carlisle has gone to London, to—ah, who cares where?—by the afternoon train!"

Lady Blanche drew a breath of relief and turned her face away.

"Oh, yes, our little comedy has finished splendidly," went on Josine; "and it deserved to, for it was admirably conceived and carried out. But, ah Heaven, the trouble it was to convince mademoiselle that milord could be false!"

Lady Blanche leaned her face on her hand and frowned.

"You think that all is safe," she said, coldly, "whereas I can see that we are at only the beginning of the affair. Do you think that Lord Norman will not write to her—follow her? Josine, I fear that this will end badly. I am sorry that—that I was tempted to have anything to do with it." And she began to pace the room.

Josine looked at her rather contemptuously.

"Miladi loses courage when the battle is over," she said. "Bah! there is little sense in that. Pardon!"—for Lady Blanche had turned on her with fierce hauteur—"Pardon, but is it not true, miladi? Is not mademoiselle gone, never to return?"

Lady Blanche smiled bitterly.

"My poor girl," she said, scornfully; "I fear that she will return, all too quickly, and that our punishment will be as speedy. Lord Norman is no fool—not a man to be deceived and bullied—"

"Bullied no, perhaps; but deceived, yes!" retorted Josine, showing her teeth. "Any man can be deceived, miladi. Bah! it is easier than deceiving a woman."

"You may try," said Lady Blanche, grimly. "And first, you will have to account for Miss Carlisle's absence. I have been going over the whole shameful business while you have been away, and I wish to Heaven that I had had nothing to do with it!"

The reaction had set in after the time of excitement and fear, actual fear, had taken possession of Lady Blanche.

"To account for mademoiselle's sudden flight is easy. I have two reasons," said Josine. "First here is this."

And she took the telegram and laid it on the table.

Lady Blanche glanced at it and turned pale.

A sharp pang of pity, actual pity for Floris, shot through her heart, and then it turned to stone again.

She pushed the telegram away with her white hand, petulantly, impatiently.

"Lord Norman will follow her immediately he returns from Scarborough," she said, with an air of conviction.

"Ah, well then, he must not see this telegram!" rejoined Josine. "And now for the other reason for mademoiselle's disappearance. What if we say that she went off with Milord Clifford?"

Lady Blanche stared at her as if she thought the girl had taken leave of her senses.

"Gone off with Lord Clifford!" she repeated. "What use would be such a lie as that, which would be detected at once!"

"But it is no lie!" said Josine, coolly enjoying the amazement she had excited. "It is certain that Miss Carlisle was met at the station by Milord Clifford, for I saw him!"

Lady Blanche smiled contemptuously.

"No one will believe that, my good girl!" she said.

Josine shrugged her shoulders.

"On my bare word? Perhaps not! But all the same, Milord Clifford was there, and traveled to London in the same car with Miss Carlisle! Others saw him—the porter—the guard, who knew him—"

Lady Blanche sprang to her feet, pale and breathless.

"Can it be possible?" she murmured.

Josine laughed.

"It is quite true, miladi! It was a strange coincidence, certainly, a happy chance. Accident is favorable to us, is it not? Now see, what is easier than to put this telegram on the fire—so"—she flung the telegram in the grate as she spoke—"and to say that we know nothing except that a telegram did come from some one or somewhere, and that Miss Carlisle did start for London at once, and that Milord Clifford met her at the station. I make no accusations! No, Heaven forbid!" she went on, with a smile.

"I say nothing! Ah, no, I'll not say the telegram came from Milord Clifford? Certainly not! I do not say that it was an appointment—their meeting at the train but—others will. All the ladies here who love scandal, and Milord Norman will believe them!"

Lady Blanche stood regarding her with breathless intentness.

"I shall tell no lies!" said Josine coolly. "I shall tell the truth—all but excepting the telegram. That I know nothing about, save that it came! You see, miladi, that the trump cards are all in our hands; we have just to play them so!"

Lady Blanche sank into her chair again.

Suppress the telegram! Another crime! Step by step she was sinking to the lowest depths of deceit and mental depravity.

And yet what could she do? She had set out upon the sea of falsehood, and must drift, drift with the tide of circumstance.

She must decide at once. In a short time—an hour or two—the party would have returned from the Cascades, and Floris' absence would have to be accounted for.

With a troubled frown she got up, and going to her jewel-case took out a bundle of notes.

Almost solemnly she held them out to Josine, who stood watching her with glittering eyes.

"Take these," she said; "it is the reward we agreed upon. I give them to you willingly—you have earned them. But from this moment I will have nothing more to do with the affair. I know nothing about Miss Carlisle's flight, and will say nothing, remember that! Tell what lies you please, account for her absence in any way that suits you best, but do not expect me to help you or to bear out any of your statements. From this moment I wash my hands of the business!" And she turned away.

Josine laughed.

"That is well said, miladi. Truly now is the time for miladi to wash her hands of the affair, now the affair is done."

Lady Blanche started.

"All is over and finished—yes! And it is quite wise of miladi to know nothing and say nothing; for her the consequences will work out themselves. And as to Josine—well, she will know nothing, absolutely nothing; and as to Monsieur Raymond—"

Lady Blanche started; for the moment she had almost forgotten him.

"He, too, will be very glad to forget! I am going now, miladi. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Lady Blanche shook her head, and Josine, with a respectful courtesy, departed.

Two hours afterward the party from the Cascades returned.

Lady Blanche could hear them laughing on the terrace outside, and at the sound of the voices a spasm of fear shook her.

How should she face them all, she, with so black a secret, so heavy a load of sin upon her bosom?

Josine, calmly and demurely putting out Lady Betty's evening attire, smiled as she heard them outside.

To her the whole thing was a keen enjoyment, and in anticipation she was reveling in Lady Betty's astonishment and perplexity.

Presently they came trooping up-

stairs, and Lady Betty entered the room.

"We are late, Josine!" she said "we must be quick."

"Certainly, miladi. Has miladi had a pleasant day?"

"It has been delightful, Josine," said Lady Betty, who had enjoyed herself immensely, and was in the best of spirits. "Delightful! I am so sorry that Miss Carlisle was not with us. How is she?"

"Better, miladi. Mademoiselle has gone out," demurely.

"Gone out!" said Lady Betty, slipping off her habit. "I'm glad of that; it will do her good. But she ought to be in by this time, or she will be awfully late for dinner."

"Miladi misunderstands me," said Josine, suavely; "mademoiselle has gone, has left Ballyfloe."

Lady Betty turned and stared at her.

"Left Ballyfloe! Miss Carlisle! Now don't be an idiot, Josine. What do you mean?"

Josine pretended to be aggrieved.

"Miladi, I tell you only what I know of my own knowledge! Mademoiselle has gone—left. She went by this afternoon's train!"

Lady Betty flung herself into Floris' room.

Josine had tidied it up, but there were still traces of the packing, and on signs of Floris.

With something like a cry of alarm, Lady Betty darted back and confronted Josine.

"It is a stupid joke!" she gasped. "Tell me it is, you wicked girl! Where is she? Floris!" and she ran to the door and called. "Where are you?"

Josine stood with a dark smile on her face, and Lady Betty came back, panting and breathless.

"Miladi, it is quite true, I do assure you," said Josine suavely. "Mademoiselle left Ballyfloe this afternoon. I myself accompanied her to the station, and saw her off."

Lady Betty sat open-eyed and open-mouthed.

"You did!—and it is not a joke! Then—then, why did she go?"

Josine shrugged her shoulders and pursed her lips.

"She left some message—some note for me?" said Lady Betty, almost tragically. "Where is it?"

"No; mademoiselle left no note for miladi," replied Josine, gravely; "but message—ah, yes; she said that I was to tell miladi she would write."

"She would write! But why did she go—why did she go?" demanded Lady Betty, in a frenzy.

Josine shrugged her shoulders again.

"Was she sent for?"

"Yes, there was a telegram, miladi."

"You obstinate pig—why couldn't you say so?" almost shrieked Lady Betty, driven frantic by Josine's assumed nonchalance.

"Miladi didn't ask me."

"Ask you! And who was the telegram from?"

Josine stared with well-simulated indignation.

"How should I know that, miladi? No, I do not know. Mademoiselle burnt it—carefully burnt it."

"Burnt it!" repeated Lady Betty. "Well—and then?"

"And then mademoiselle directed me to pack her box, and order a carriage for the station; and I did so, and accompanied mademoiselle."

"And she has gone up to London by herself!" wailed Lady Betty. "Lord Norman will go out of his mind!"

"Ah! but mademoiselle has not traveled alone. Ah, no!" said Josine. "The gentleman met her at the station, yes."

"The gentleman, you idiot!—what gentleman?" demanded Lady Betty, all eyes.

"Milord Clifford, miladi!" replied Josine, demurely.

Lady Betty gazed at her open-mouthed, then turned deep crimson.

"You wicked, lying girl!" she gasped.

"Miladi!" exclaimed Josine, facing round and drawing herself to her full height.

"You wicked girl!" repeated poor Lady Betty. "How dare you stand there and tell me such dreadful lies? Miss Carlisle gone off with Lord Clifford!"

"Oh, pardon, miladi!" said Josine, sweetly; "it was not I who said that, it was miladi. I only said mademoiselle met milord at the station—not that she had gone off with him."

"But yes, miladi, he was!" she insisted. "I myself saw him. He traveled in the same car with mademoiselle! Ah, you do not believe me! Then ask the porter—the guard, who knows him! Inquire for yourself, miladi! Why should I tell miladi a lie? Miss Carlisle will write directly and tell miladi what I now tell her, that she went from Ballyfloe with Milord Clifford!"

Poor Lady Betty sat transfixed. Was the girl lying? It seemed impossible that she should be speaking the truth. And yet, why should she lie? What avail would lying be to her? What profit, seeing that, as she said, the truth would be known in a few hours?

Josine held up the dinner-dress calmly.

"Shall I assist miladi?"

"Don't speak to me—yet! Tell me more, Josine! I—I am sorry if—I called you names that don't belong to you; but—are you sure that it was Lord Clifford?"

"Ah, but certain, miladi!"

Josine, with a smile. "I know milord well. Besides, I spoke with him! But, and!"—with a sudden look of compunction—"perhaps I ought not to tell! I have betrayed mademoiselle's confidence."

Lady Betty flushed.

"Nonsense! There is no confidence in the matter!"

"I am glad of that!" said Josine, with an air of relief; "for Miss Carlisle did offer me a large sum of money and though I did not take it, I should not like to betray her confidence."

Lady Betty turned pale.

Floris fled suddenly, without a word of warning or explanation, and in the company of Bertie—Bertie, who had been her most passionate lover—and Floris had offered a large sum of money as a bribe to Josine!

Great Heaven, what did it mean, if it did not mean that Floris had eloped with Bertie!

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

NECESSARY INFORMATION.

Most farmers can estimate closely the number of bushels of grain raised, and tell fairly accurately the number of tons of hay grown, but when it comes to the really most important income of the farm the produce of each cow, it's all a blank, and they say, "Oh, I don't know, I get my cheque each month, that's all I care about."

While a knowledge of the total weight of milk delivered at the factory is necessary, it never conveys to the farmer the information he stands in need of as to the profit made by each cow in the stable. That information is absolutely necessary to him if he desires to consider himself a credit to his profession, a first-class, business-like dairyman. Otherwise these satisfying totals or delusive averages will continue to allow the one or two poor cows in every herd to consume good feed for which no profitable return is ever given.

In many herds where no attempt at checking up individual performance has been made, there is frequently to be found a difference of \$30 to \$40 in the earning power of the best and poorest cow. Farmers need to consider that statement carefully. In the Dominion are to be found herds, let us say of 12 or 14 cows, with a fairly good average yield of perhaps as high as 5,500 pounds of milk, where the highest yield is close on to 8,000 pounds of milk and 330 pounds of fat; but where the lowest yield is only about 3,700 pounds of milk and 150 pounds of fat. Such comparisons are only made possible by noting the actual performance of each individual cow for her full milking period. Weigh and sample regularly and make sure that each cow brings in good profit.

HINTS ON BUTTER-MAKING.

Never dip the fingers into the pail while milking. Milk with dry hands. Carry the milk to the dairy while warm from the cow. It must not be allowed to cool before straining in the creamery, or putting through the separator.

Place the cream in a deep earthen vessel, and stir well when adding fresh cream.

Never churn until the last added cream has been mixed twelve hours and it has an acid taste and a satiny appearance.

Keep churning room as near 60 degrees as possible. Never fill the churn more than half full of cream. Churn at medium speed. Always

over the granular butter, one-half ounce to the pound for mild, and one ounce to the pound for salt butter, and one tablespoonful of granulated sugar to ten pounds of butter.

Mix the salt and sugar through the butter carefully and set away in a dry, cool place for six to twelve hours before making up.

FARM NOTES.

Clean up fence rows, sides of ditches and uncultivated corners. It will not only improve the looks of the premises but it will help to keep down weeds on the cultivated land.

Use a thermometer, and in summer churn at 60 degrees.

Open the vent and allow the escape of the gas a few minutes after commencing the churning.

Stop as soon as the butter breaks open the churn and add a little cold water.

Churn a few seconds gently, until the butter is like grains of wheat, then draw off the butter-milk, and add cold water for washing. Repeat this until water runs clear.

Remove butter to the worker, and sprinkle the finest, driest salt

On the Isle of Man herrings are packed in ferns and arrive on the market in as fresh a condition as when they were shipped. Potatoes packed in ferns keep many months longer than others packed only in straw. Experiments made with both straw and fern leaves in the same cellar showed surprising results in favor of ferns.

Every farmer who wants to keep sheep ought to keep them, and adopt the best measures for their protection. Whenever a good majority of farmers become personally interested, by having sheep of their own, effective laws for the proper restraint of dogs will be enacted and vigorously enforced. Farmers should not wait for it, but engage in sheep husbandry as the quickest way to secure legislation that will thoroughly protect the industry.

The organic part of the manure pile, mainly litter, will decay when incorporated with the field soil almost as rapidly as it will in the manure heap. In the latter its decay is principally accelerated by moisture and fermentation, and if not provided against, chemical elements of value are volatilized and escape into the atmosphere. Here is a loss of fertilizing value and reduction of bulk at the same time. If this manure were not allowed to accumulate, but put on the field, and mixed at once with the soil, or even put on some growing crop, its value as humus would begin at once, its bulk be at its greatest volume, and the active plant roots take care of all chemical changes within their provinces.

NEW ZEALAND CALL BIRD.

Used by Huntsmen to Decoy Wild Parrots.

The New Zealand kakapo, or large parrot, with all its credit for brains, allows itself to be caught in a very simple manner.

In the dusk of the early dawn the Maoris, carrying tame kakapos tied to long sticks, set off to hunt. These are the call birds who are used to attract by their screams the large flocks of kakapos flying overhead.

When one Maori tethers the call birds by the leg, and sets them screaming to the full extent of their lusty lungs, another cuts as many perches as there are men in the hunting party from the neighboring bush. By means of flax bands these are lashed firmly to different parts of a little hut or "whare" (in which the hunters secrete themselves), so as to act as perches for the unsuspecting birds.

Each perch is so fixed that it can be drawn down into the "whare" through the roof. On the perches are placed running nooses of flax, and when all is prepared, each Maori sits quietly within the "whare" with his flax cord in his hand ready to pull at the right moment.

The call birds are then disturbed by means of a long stick, and presently a large flock of parrots, hearing their cries, wheel down and settle with a great chattering in the adjacent trees. One by one they fly and settle on the perches of the "whare" to hold converse with the call birds, and when every perch is occupied a Maori gives the signal and the nooses are pulled. The hubbub of screaming and scolding as each perch with its captured parrot is drawn down into the "whare" can be best imagined. It is only equalled by the frantic excitement of the Maoris as they haul in their captures.

Some of us never get beyond the kindergarten grade in the school of experience.